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SUBJECT: EGYPT'S UNGA PRIORITIES: A/S ESTHER BRIMMER'S
SEPTEMBER 22 MEETING WITH EGYPTIAN UN DIRECTOR NAELA GABR

11. SUMMARY. A/S Brimmer met with Egyptian UN Director Naela Gabr on September 22 on the margins of the 64th UN General Assembly (UNGA). The discussion focused on gender issues, the Middle East Safeguards resolution, food security, human rights, UNESCO Director-General election and the UNESCO. END SUMMARY.

12. At a meeting with IO Assistant Secretary Esther Brimmer, Egyptian UN Director Naela Gabr touched on a wide range of UN issues. Gabr mentioned that Egypt's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was a key priority. As President of the NAM, they were open to fostering North-South cooperation in the UN. They supported "re-structuring exercises" that would preserve the credibility and efficiency of the UN and enhance the UN's ability to play a role in solving world crises. Egypt was committed to strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the UN system through greater system-wide coherence, "maintaining the role of ECOSOC," and avoiding duplication and increasing transparency.

UNESCO Director General Elections

13. Towards the end of the meeting, Gabr expressed "shock" that Egyptian candidate Farouk Hosni was defeated in the UNESCO Director-General elections, noting that Egypt was itself "the world's largest open-air museum" and citing Egypt's close work with UNESCO over the years. She noted that this defeat would have a negative impact on multilateral affairs. Gabr said she had spoken to Ambassador Scobey, saying that if Egypt were defeated, people would say that it was because of "underground maneuvers" by the United States, which could affect the bilateral relationship, as well. Gabr said that the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had always been particularly supportive of a constructive working relationship with the United States, but that the UNESCO election defeat would have a "bad effect, an effect that is negative to the end of the world."

14. (SBU) A/S Brimmer noted that the tone of the race was inappropriate and that the United States did not like the way our ambassador was portrayed in the Egyptian media. She called for the highest standards of conduct in all UN elections. Gabr agreed, but stated that she felt that many of the candidates, including the Austrian and Ecuadorian candidates, were not sufficiently qualified for the position. Gabr felt that the campaign was not fair. That said, Gabr noted that not being Director-General would free Egypt's "movements." She implied that Egypt might express its displeasure in multilateral cultural fora, including the World Heritage Council. She specifically cited "preserving Jerusalem's identity" as an area in which they had high expectations of UNESCO, something on which they would make no concessions in the future. Gabr said that regardless of the outcome of the UNESCO elections, however, she was committed to working together with us in other areas going forward.

Gender Issues

¶5. Gabr noted that Egypt expects to host two major conferences on women's issues and development, one with the NAM and one with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). A/S Brimmer mentioned that maternal health was also a key U.S. priority; Gabr replied that Egypt would be eager to work with us on that issue.

¶6. Regarding the September 14 GA resolution creating the gender entity, Gabr said that the leader of the entity should be sensitive to: (a) "norm setting" that would result in concrete outcomes; (b) operational activities; and (c) monitoring. Gabr was particularly concerned that monitoring efforts should not overlap with those of the other bodies. Gabr expressed further concern that the relationship between the new architecture and the UN Security Council was not clear. Both A/S Brimmer and Gabr agreed that violence against women in conflict situations was a grave threat against international peace and security that should be addressed by the Council. Gabr called for an entity that can take clear actions and produce tangible results that transcend only conversations and conferences. Gabr expressed personal distress at the plight of women in many sub-Saharan African countries, as well as the misperception that Islam is against women.

Middle East Safeguards Resolution

¶7. Gabr again expressed "shock" at the "lack of U.S. support" for Egypt's Middle East Safeguards resolution at the IAEA. (Note: The United States abstained. End Note.) She felt that Egypt was embarking on a "new phase" and had already shown "maximum flexibility," and that our perceived lack of support was "not the way to prepare for the NPT conference." A/S Brimmer re-iterated support for Egypt's priorities regarding nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament in the 2010 conference. Gabr said that this resolution is very important to Egypt's priorities for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, as well as to Egyptian media reactions.

Food Security

¶8. Gabr mentioned that food security was an important issue, particularly as it concerns women in rural societies where women play such a large role in agricultural production. Gabr mentioned that the Egyptian First Lady would host a gathering of First Ladies from the NAM on the margins of the November food security conference in Rome, consisting of statements and panel discussions, with the results being presented to the main plenary meetings.

Human Rights

¶9. Egypt supported the 2011 review of the Human Rights Council as a way of improving procedures. On freedom of expression, Gabr said that the resolution was a good step. She anticipated being queried on defamation of religion again, but said that this issue was a matter that "needs time, is more sensitive, and we will wait to see how it evolves."

¶10. Gabr said that Egypt did not like the UN imposing a "value system on our society." She cited as an example "imposing rules regarding sexual orientation." She said that sexual orientation was a choice with which no one in Egypt has a problem with, noting that Egypt had no laws discriminating against homosexuals and that Egypt opposed any form of discrimination. She said that Egypt condemned violence against minorities, and stated that the country imposed the death penalty only for first-degree murder, rape

and kidnapping, and drug-trafficking, but not for homosexuality. Thus, she said, in dealing with similar issues, "legal steps are fine, but don't impose values on us.

We do not like people playing games and maneuvering in documents from the Secretariat."

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